

TheMANY FACES OF AGING



Americans are volunteering 20% more than they did 20 years ago, and older persons are responsible for nearly all of this increase.

The key to living longer is living "better." Volunteering is an excellent way to be involved and to make a difference.

Older persons are the backbone of home, community and faith-based services.

Older Americans Volunteer

Volunteering: Good for the Mind, Body, and Community

Americans are living longer. And research shows that older persons across the globe will be living even longer in the future than they are now. The key, of course, is not just to live longer, but to live better. And we know that the hallmarks of active aging are to engage in productive, satisfying activities such as volunteer work, employment and community participation, and to engage in a healthy and vigorous lifestyle. Volunteering provides an opportunity to contribute to society and to remain socially and intellectually stimulated. And older Americans – with the wealth of life experiences, knowledge, and expertise they have attained – constitute some of America's most valued volunteers.

AoA – Saluting Older Persons Who Volunteer

The Administration on Aging (AoA) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through its network of state and area agencies on aging and tribal organizations, relies on the talents of older Americans to help others – particularly assisting older persons who are at risk of losing their independence. Volunteers – especially older volunteers -- are the backbone of home and community-based services and nutrition programs carried out at the state and local level by community and faith-based organizations. Excellent volunteer opportunities for older Americans include: assisting at group meal sites and delivering meals to the homebound and elderly; escorting frail older persons to medical appointments and other needed services; and visiting homebound older persons. Other opportunities could involve repairing and weatherizing homes of low-income and frail older persons; counseling older persons in a variety of areas including health promotion, nutrition, legal and financial concerns; serving as ombudsmen to help ensure the well-being of residents in long-term care facilities; and assisting in senior centers, day care, and other group programs. Church and other faith-based organizations that provide services such as victim and disaster assistance, homemaker services, and hospice also provide wonderful opportunities for older Americans to volunteer.

Seniors Helping Seniors Protect their Health Care. Another AoA volunteer opportunity is the Senior Medicare Patrol Project. In 1997, AoA established demonstration projects that utilize the skills and expertise of retired professionals in identifying and reporting waste, fraud and abuse in health care. These projects are designed to recruit and train retired professionals, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, accountants, and others who



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wish to work with their peers in senior centers and other places where older persons gather. Volunteers work in their communities and in local senior centers to help identify deceptive health care practices, such as overbilling, overcharging, or providing unnecessary or inappropriate services. Senior volunteers undergo several days of training reviewing health care benefit statements and outlining steps individuals can take to protect themselves. For more information, visit our website at: www.aoa.gov/ort.

The Administration on Aging encourages seniors to help seniors protect their health care coverage through volunteer programs.

Seniors Helping Children and Families At Risk. Since 1991, AoA has supported volunteer senior aid projects, better known as the Family Friends program. Family Friends is an intergenerational volunteer program that matches older adults with children and families at risk. The volunteer gives support to families in crisis by caring for, listening to, and providing practical assistance to meet the demands of daily living. All of these projects are based on the principle that Family Friends – active, involved and committed older people – give of themselves to improve the lives of children.

Volunteering benefits the volunteer AND the recipient.

Improving Service Opportunities for Seniors. America is opening new doors every day, creating new roles and responsibilities for older persons that fully recognize their capabilities. The principal federal vehicle for senior volunteerism is the **Senior Corps**. The Senior Corps offers several volunteer programs for seniors including: **the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program**, in which participants provide services that range from working with courts to volunteering in adult day care centers and nursing homes; **the Foster Grandparent Program**, in which participants offer support to children with special needs; and **the Senior Companion Program**, in which participants provide assistance to help at-risk elderly individuals live independently. These programs are funded by the Corporation for National Service (CNS). For more information on CNS, phone 202-606-5000 or visit their website at: www.cns.gov. For more Information on the Senior Corps, phone 1-800-424-8867 or visit their website at: www.seniorcorps.org.

Additional Opportunities. No matter what your background or qualifications, there are numerous volunteer opportunities in which you can participate. The list below shows just a few of the many organizations that provide volunteer opportunities. You may wish to contact these organizations directly to learn more about opportunities in your area of interest.

AARP Volunteer Center
(202) 434-3200
www.aarp.org

America's Promise
(800) 365-0153
www.americaspromise.org

Volunteers of America
(703) 341-5000
www.voa.org

Points of Light Foundation
(202) 729-8000
www.pointsoflight.org

Senior Corp of Retired
Executives (SCORE)
1-800-634-0245
www.score.org

For more information. If you are interested in a volunteer activity and don't know how to access it, contact your area agency on aging or State Unit on Aging, both listed in your phone directory. Also check under "volunteer action centers," "volunteer bureaus," or even your local community, church or hospital. Or call the Eldercare Locator, which is a toll-free information and assistance directory supported by the AoA, at (800) 677-1116

Seniors are Crucial to the Future of Volunteerism. Seniors are not only in an excellent position to volunteer, but also constitute some of America's best volunteers because of the knowledge, expertise and experience they bring. If you are interested in volunteering, think about your interests and background and what you might enjoy doing the most. Don't be afraid to ask questions, such as how much time an activity would involve, what happens if you cannot participate on a particular day, or any other concerns you might have. **The important thing is to get involved.**

Working in close partnership with its sister agencies in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the AoA is the official Federal agency dedicated to policy development, planning and the delivery of supportive home and community-based services to older persons and their caregivers. The AoA works through the national aging network of 56 State Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 233 Tribal and Native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations, and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers. For more information about the AoA, please contact:

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Department of Health and Human Services
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Washington, DC 20201

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Fax: (202) 260-1012
Email: aoainfo@aoa.gov
Web: www.aoa.gov

Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET